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CDC Implements New Tiered Travel Health Guidance System

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) today implemented a new system for providing travelers with guidance about potential health hazards and the steps they can take to protect themselves when traveling abroad. The new system makes it easier for the public to understand what their risks may be during an emerging public health crisis and what they can do to protect themselves.

"As we learned during last year's SARS outbreak, infectious diseases can spread quickly as people travel around the globe," said CDC Director Dr. Julie Gerberding. "This new system allows us to provide travelers with very important, real-time information that will be easy for them to apply to protect their health."

The new system is effective immediately and will replace the previous travel alerts and advisories. Guidance will be posted on the CDC Travelers' Health web site as cases of disease occur and will include four levels:

In The News: is the lowest level of notice and will provide information about sporadic cases of disease or an occurrence of a disease of public health significance affecting a traveler or travel destination. The risk for an individual traveler does not differ from the usual risk in that area.

Outbreak Notice: provides information about a disease outbreak in a limited geographic area or setting. The risk to travelers is defined and limited, and the notice will remind travelers about standard or enhanced travel recommendations, such as vaccination.

Travel Health Precaution: provides specific information to travelers about a disease outbreak of greater scope and over a larger geographic area to reduce the risk of infection. The precaution also provides guidance to travelers about what to do if they become ill while in the area. CDC does not recommend against travel to a specific area, but may recommend limiting exposure to a defined setting, for example, poultry farms or health-care settings.

Travel Health Warning: recommends against nonessential travel to an area because a disease of public health concern is expanding outside of areas or populations that were initially affected. The purpose of a travel warning is to reduce the volume of traffic to affected areas, limiting the risk of spreading the disease to unaffected areas.

CDC has broad authority under section 301 of the Public Health Service Act (42 USC 241) to make information available to the public regarding the causes, diagnosis, treatment, control, and prevention of physical and mental diseases and other impairments of man. CDC endeavors to provide accurate and credible health information and promote health through strong partnerships both at home and abroad.

A complete description of the definitions and criteria for issuing and removing travel notices can be found at www.cdc.gov/travel.

For more information contact CDC, Media Relations (404) 639-3286.

##This Message was distributed to State and Local Health Officers, Public Information Officers, Laboratory Directors, Weapons of Mass Destruction Coordinators, State Epidemiologists and HAN Coordinators as well as Clinician organizations##

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